

## **Donore Avenue Community - Solidarity Committee.**

At the end of October 2018 Ivan Vodopivec, member of the solidarity commission of the province, visited us. Our common reflection showed us we are individually working in many related fields. His visit helped us to see the 'wood for the trees'.

Ivan walked the area and met individuals and some groups. We hope he got a sense of what it is like for people to live in the area.

This is a disadvantaged and marginalised area of Dublin. It has been for a long time. It can be a harsh place to live and work, with the everyday human consequences of drug addiction; poverty; unemployment; violence and aggression – verbal and physical.

Our experiences are many and varied:

- Finger pricked by needle found in the garden and months of medical supervision.
- "The Lord be with you" greeted with silence from the full church at the funeral and so on through the funeral mass.
- "Ah Fuck you" said the young boy to the priest, when greeted on the street.
- "She is the best little boxer in the club, so fast"
- "you mean, they want their child baptised but won't come to mass to have it done – Oh, I give up"
- More children are presenting for baptism this year aged 7 or 8. They are preparing for first communion in school. Is this of conviction or for the celebratory day?
- "Can you give me so help, Father"? The other priest used to.
- The Parish Team and Pastoral Council resist the request that will effectively establish social segregation by having separate first communion celebrations for the local schools. The parish insists on one event for all.
- The parish have an information table, in the local community centre, along with many other groups, on the day of celebration to mark the jubilee of the local Credit Union.
- The parish are invited to be on the Regeneration Board for a particularly disadvantaged section of the parish, along with Dublin City Council, residents, Police, and other local projects.
- "Don't come here, if you don't love the people", she said. I disagree with her, but I know what she means.
- We are a Marist presence offering support, encouragement and witness to each other and in the local community.
- On a day to day basis this parish and community come into direct contact with poor, vulnerable and marginalised people who call to the house, the church, the grounds or who live in the locality.

- Individual confreres in the community have similar contact through their presence with the Missionary Sisters of Charity; the Society of St Vincent de Paul; in the local schools and centres and Marist schools in Dublin.

Ivan's visit raised further reflections also along these lines:

- Previous Solidarity Committee surveys have shown the wide variety of solidarity ministry in the province, by confreres and by the education institutions. Could the findings from these surveys be re-circulated?
- Solidarity Ministry is about working with refugees, with homeless people, with drug addicts, with prisoners, in places such as Ranong, or the Philippines or other highly valued socially disadvantaged groupings or locations. But not exclusively so. It is a lot broader than that. It is about being a presence with others in the market square, in solidarity with people and communities we are living with and who daily are challenged to find a way to "live life to the full". Not only out there but also here at home, across the road.
- In the current development of the "New Ireland" this marginalised and disadvantaged status of Donore Avenue is more and more beginning to feel like it is reflecting the similar state of the Catholic Church and of priests in Irish society today. It is beginning to feel like the Church in Ireland is moving to the margins. Not the financial margins however. Not yet, anyway.
- Our experience is that the Church is one group among many now in the local market place. But it needs to find its new place. It is no longer in the dominant place or the place of priority. This is evolving very fast. What new opportunities does this offer in the field of solidarity, for example, more cooperation with existing structures?

Many thanks for your visit Ivan and for the work of the Solidarity Commission.

David Corrigan

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